7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

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The open confrontation by the civil authorities with the suspected witch, in which they warned him to stop before violence resulted, represents a new strategy in the contest between officials and curers. Formerly even when there was strong suspicion against a man, the principales and judges kept quiet. If they acted, it was to kill the suspect without forewarning. The new strategy reveals the position of strength from which they now operate. That the president could joke in the town hall about the fear of the judges in dealing with the accused curer (see his final remark above) is indicative of a changed attitude. Incidents such as that of the curer consulting the clinic nurse instead of his fellow curers, which was noted and commented upon by the brother of the president, may further serve to undermine the townspeople's belief in the power of the curers.

In the weeks following the incident, the president and his brother discussed the incident, pointing out their fearlessness in openly confronting the witch. The curers clearly tried to deny any responsibility as a group with the remark: "Whoever did it did not advise us." They expressed the feeling that it is against professional ethics: "Whoever did it is a very bad witch"; but they refuse to name him or admit knowledge of who did it. "We do not know where it is or what it is that he did." The behavior of the curers in this incident is clearly defensive and stems from their loss of control and initiative.

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Political Parties and Factions

In 1950 the first contest for the post of president was started by two brothers who had secured the backing of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). Never before had anyone initiated his own candidacy outside the traditional nomination procedure through the old officials in the town hall. The brothers lived in the new barrio of Yut Hok, the ejido land grant of Ahk'olnantik. The candidacy disturbed the customary alternation of posts between Ahk'olnantik and Alannantik. Threatened by the imbalance, the leaders of Alannantik secured the backing of the Partido Revolucionario Institutionalizado (PRI) for their candidate. The PAN candidate won the election. However, he was never able to consolidate political sup-

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

port. At his death, he had no successor, and "the town remained in peace."

In this first political contest, the conflict was interpreted as opposition between the dual divisions. Factional disputes and the sense of political responsibility and control were contained within these parameters, and any conflict was conceived of as a threat to territorial balancing mechanisms.

The new factions that have developed since 1963 are tied to economic rather than territorial competition. In 1960 the first truck-owning cooperative was organized under the leadership of the former Ladino secretary. The twenty shareholders of the town had only a small amount of capital in the truck, and the controlling interest was in the hands of the secretary's wife. The cooperative was merely a device to gain business in carrying pottery and wheat from the town to the market centers. In 1963 a new truck-owning cooperative was organized by local Indians. The two brothers, Santiago and José, secured capital to buy the truck from thirty residents of the town without any assistance from outside. The shareholders of the new cooperative came from both sides of the dual division, and from the outlying barrios.

When the leaders of the new cooperative tried to get permits and certificates to license the car and the operator, they were refused by the town president who was a shareholder of the first cooperative. The Indians then hired a Ladino truck driver from the neighboring town, and the son of one of the shareholders served as assistant. They realized that it was necessary to get control of the local political positions in order to extend their operations. With the help of the schoolteacher, they got eighty-one signatures on the petition for the PRI candicacy of one of the brothers, José, in the presidential nomination of 1964. He was opposed by a ladinoized Indian living in one of the barrios who was backed by the Ladino secretary who was leader of the competing trucking cooperative. The opponent did not have a chance of winning, as the leaders of the new cooperative pointed out, because of two strikes against him: he was not a resident of the center and he had only PAN backing. The Indians are aware that nothing can be gained politically by a PAN-backed president since PRI is now the party in control of regional and national offices.

After José's election, the Indian truck driver was able to get a driving license. With the help of the schoolmaster, the cooperative was able to get

7t Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

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493 permission to extend operations to hot country where the Indians of the town held ejido land. This territory had been controlled by the state-wide trucking sindicate whose monopoly was protected by government permits. On the basis that they were poor, nonprofit-making ejidatarios, the Indians were granted the right to truck corn from the ejido colonies to the highlands. Whenever the cooperative leaders planned to go to the departmental capital to make their appeals, the schoolmaster counseled them to wear their Indian costume—the white shirt and pants with red sash, sandals, and woolen kotonču—in order to play the role of simple campesinos more convincingly. He was aware of the effectiveness of this pose in pro-Indian governmental circles.

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• 665 The PRI leadership in the department capital is neither aware of nor interested in the local factions which seek their support. Their concern is only that the vote is solidly behind regional and national candidates of the party, and they support the group that can mobilize the largest number of votes. A policy of favoritism toward Indians, based on an ideology of *indigenismo*, pro-Indianism, is coupled with a policy of permitting local autonomy. The national committee's program for promoting literacy has never reached this community nor any that I know of in the area. The party's promotion of Indian welfare consists of supporting demands made by Indian constituents and bringing them to the attention of civil service officials assigned to these functions. Party officials thus act as intermediaries between the voters and the bureaucracy of the government, channeling complaints and demands.

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181 In the development of factions around new economic interests, the Indians have shifted from an ideology in which the dialectic of conflict was cast in traditional dual-division opposition to one in which the conflict is seen as Indian versus Ladino domination of enterprises. Since these interests cut across the territorial divisions, the economic factions have not crystallized along territorial lines. It is this shift in perspective which makes for the "qualitative" change in local political organization.

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Competition between Caciques

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563 There are several dimensions to the role of cacique in Tzo'ontahal. First, it is a role created by outside interests and occupied by someone mar-

71 Nash E-5 (1957-1967), 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

4. In a series of confrontations, the civil officials have challenged the social control functions of the curers. Witch-killings in which many of the victims have been curers have minimized but not overcome the power of these men.

5. The priest has succeeded in establishing control over the church, but the Indians may yet succeed in deposing him, a plan they were putting into effect when I left town.

The Indians are now aware of their rights to limit—or eliminate if necessary—the self-appointed caciques. The new cacique promotes the community welfare not only in his rhetoric but in the services he performs for the officials. His involvement in political affairs is tolerated, not encouraged, and the officials are ready to turn to alternative sources of aid in their activities.

The involvement of the PRI in local elections has not introduced a new center of power in the political arena. Political factions are based on economic interests contained within the town, and the autonomy of the town has in no way been affected by leadership from party headquarters in the state capitol. The community and the party use each other for their own ends in almost complete ignorance of what is occurring in the domain of the other.

The system of beliefs and understandings has changed along with these organizational changes. The most significant change has been the waning belief in the guardianship of the ancestors. The absence of the curers at the fiesta of the caves means that they no longer have this ritual occasion to validate their claims by communicating with the ancestors. The loss of leadership and of a hierarchy of prestige within the ranks of curers has removed internal controls over the profession and further undermined their position. The diminishing respect with which they are treated in the town hall and the increasing number of murders of curers accused of witchcraft is directly related to the loss of belief in their power as guardians. Since they were not an integral part of the civil-religious hierarchy, as the curers were in Oxchuk (Villa Rojas 1947), this has not upset the hierarchy, but it has changed the balance of power in the wider community.

The diminishing significance of the leadership of the principales is tied

9:Nash E-5 (1964) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Tzo?ontahal

was done at his order for the school.[11] The new cooperative was harassed by the old group, since the president did everything in his power to cut down their competition. As fiscal, his other role, he maneuvered the appointment of the chief business agent of the new truck cooperative and three other members as *nič'anil martomaetik*, junior caretakers of the saints. This meant that their Sundays were occupied in church affairs and cut into their taxiing of passengers from Tzo?ontahal to Himšol, the neighboring Ladino town.

The nomination of the president was effected by winning the support of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Supporters of the nominee secured over 85 signatures from townspeople; the opposition candidate failed to get more than 28. Once PRI support was obtained, the election on November 20 was assured since one-party rule prevails here as in the capital. This is the first election which has been contested in 10 years. The last contest came when some members of the barrio of Yut' hok became members of the minor party, Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). Because this group and their presidential candidate all came from one side of the dual division, Alannantik, those from the other side said that they should have a party representative. They drew up a plan to run a candidate on PRI. The PAN candidate won. The present contest was drawn on the basis of membership in the truck-owning cooperatives which cut across the dual division.

The present nominee did not want to run for office. Early in the running there were verbal threats on his life. He had never passed in any office other than that of president of the ejido commission, and although the office of president is not a rung in the ladder to office, it is expected that the incumbent would at least have experience as síndico. Three sources of opposition to his candidacy developed. First in importance was the original trucking cooperative, which objected to the competition of the president and his faction in the new cooperative. Second, these members spread the rumor that the new president would bring in federal agents to break up the liquor traffic, which was becoming one of Tzo?ontahal's most important economic self-development projects. Thus all the distillers were apprehensive of their future under his term of office. Third, there was opposition on the

[11] Siverts (1964) describes Ladinos' "competition for each others' Indians in Cancuc."

[P. 223-A]